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# Polish trial's import

**A**s the tale of the slain Polish Solidarity priest unfolds in the Polish city of Torun, one must wonder at how incredible it all is. Now, on top of everything, some of Father Jerzy Popieluszko's lawyers have contended that a foreign power instigated the murder to provoke political unrest, followed by government repression.

"Who could have been behind this provocation?" one lawyer, Jan Olszewski, said at one point in the trial. "In whose interest could it have been for Poland to become a nation of poverty, despair, and terror?"

"I believe that no group in Poland could possibly have wished for that. Every schoolchild who is taught history knows who wants a weak Poland."

The "foreign power" he refers to is the Soviet Union, of course, whose KGB has the most intricate and tangled relations with Polish intelligence — whose officers killed the popular priest. When I was in Warsaw in December, Polish leader Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski went so far as to tell a group of us that Poland would be much farther along "were it not for the presence of uninvited guests in the country." For those "guests," read it Soviets, as well.

Somehow, we have not quite grasped the importance of what this means. For when we examine the Eastern bloc carefully these days, we see that it is crumbling on all levels: economically, certainly, but also spiritually and structurally. But, concomitantly, the Soviets are also beginning — beginning — to show troubled change, not only in Eastern Europe but also in the Third World "Marxist" states; and this also could be the harbinger of gradual but important changes for the future.

The Iron Curtain, turned to malleable tin? Well, not quite, but ... Changes are not only evident in Poland, where today a leader such as Gen. Jaruzelski gives press conferences and for the first time in history Eastern bloc intelligence officers are being tried in a court of law. In Hungary, the economic liberalization has gone so fast it is getting hard to tell it from its Western neighbors.

Once more, in Hungary, as in so many places, the Marxist ideology has broken down to such an extent that it hardly affects the lives of people anymore. Father Jean Yzes Calvez, the assistant to the head of the Jesuits, remarked recently during a visit to Washington that when he traveled to Hungary, he found that the society had returned to moral convictions that preceded Marxist ideology. This, of course, obviates the historical claims of Marxism.

Everybody pretty much knows what is happening now in China, where a liberalized free economy and the rule of law are taking over from the rigid and non-representative structures of Communist rule; but far less known is the fact that similar changes are beginning to occur in some African countries, such as Mozambique and Guinea.

With this has come another promising development. The former "colonialists outside," on whom so much was blamed, have given way to what some analysts are calling the "colonialists within" in the Third World.

After World War II, many of the decolonizing countries turned to communism as the best system by which to develop. It seemed applicable then because they could not and would not return to the colonialists' capitalism. However, it turned out that poverty, the lack of education, and the lack of a work ethic couldn't all be blamed on the former colonialists. That is why many Third World intellectuals now are talking about the colonialists within — their own internal problems and realities.

There is an air of sobering up about the world today, plus a willingness to do the hard and long work that constitutes "development." There is a sense, finally, of an approaching end to the often hysterical periods of paranoia and perpetual victimization that offered no answers or even respectable analysis, only eternal blame — always on someone else.

Finally, as one watches a country like Poland, or even China, or even those Third World countries, one has to wonder now if anyone there ever really believed all that ideological cant.

For, if they did, then how could all these varying peoples be shedding that faith with the sureness of an army of snakes in molting season?

That is why the drama in that Polish courtroom is so important. Not only a trial is going on there; it has become a metaphor for the new struggle for truth that is beginning to illuminate life in so many stagnant and dark corners of the world.

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